Amendments to the Claims

1. (Original) A spacer for positioning a portion of a sleeve away from a portion of a sling at least partially enclosed within the sleeve.

2. (Original) The spacer of claim 1 wherein the spacer at least partially encloses the portion of the sleeve that is spaced away from the portion of the sling.

3. (Original) The spacer of claim 2 wherein the sleeve comprises a first sleeve having a first sleeve end and a second sleeve having a second sleeve end, wherein the first and second sleeve ends are spaced away from the portion of the sling.

4. (Original) The spacer of claim 1 wherein the spacer comprises a tube having a lumen extending therethrough for traversal of the portion of the sleeve.

5. (Original) The spacer of claim 4 wherein the tube has a first end and a second end and a first tube portion and a second tube portion, wherein the first and second tube portions are formed into a V-shape.

6. (Original) The spacer of claim 5 wherein the tube includes an aperture at a vertex of the first and second tube portions for passing the portion of the sleeve in and out of the tube during traversal so as to form a sleeve bridge between the first and second tube ends.

7. (Original) The spacer of claim 4 further comprising an anchoring mechanism for anchoring the spacer to the sling.

8. (Original) The spacer of claim 7 wherein the anchoring mechanism is a suture.

9. (Original) The spacer of claim 5 comprising a truss extending between the first and second tube portions.

10. (Original) The spacer of claim 1 comprising a sling engaging member for engaging the sling.

11. (Original) The spacer of claim 10 wherein the sling engaging member comprises a sling slot.

12. (Original) The spacer of claim 1 comprising a sleeve engaging member for traversal by the portion of the sleeve.

13. (Original) The spacer of claim 10 comprising a tissue spacing member for spacing the sling away from a patient's tissue.

14. (Original) The spacer of claim 13 wherein the tissue spacing member has a concave surface.

15. (Original) The spacer of claim 10 comprising an indicator for indicating a direction in which the spacer is to be removed.

16. (Original) The spacer of claim 1 wherein the spacer comprises a handle for facilitating removal of the spacer by a medical operator.

17. (Original) The spacer of claim 15 wherein the indicator forms a handle having an arrowhead shape.

18. (Original) The spacer of claim 11 wherein the sling slot comprises an anchoring mechanism.

19. (Original) The spacer of claim 18 wherein the anchoring mechanism comprises teeth.

20. (Original) The spacer of claim 19 wherein the teeth are tapered.

21. (Original) The spacer of claim 18 wherein the anchoring mechanism comprises a cantilever

beam.

22. (Original) The spacer of claim 21 wherein the cantilever beam has an inverted T-shape.

23. (Original) The spacer of claim 1 comprising a receptacle for traversal by the portion of the sleeve and an insert for mating within the receptacle and holding the portion of the sleeve in place within the receptacle.

24. (Original) The spacer of claim 23 wherein the receptacle is substantially U-shape.

25. (Original) The spacer of claim 12 comprising an elongated shaft extending between a sleeve bridge formed by the sleeve engaging member and the sling and including a channel for traversal by the portion of the sleeve.

26. (Original) The spacer of claim 25 wherein the sleeve engaging member is substantially U-shaped for forming the sleeve bridge.

27. (Original) The spacer of claim 11 wherein the sling engaging member comprises a pin extending from the spacer.

28. (Original) The spacer of claim 27 comprising an elongated shaft extending between the pin and the sling engaging member and including a channel for traversal by the sleeve.

29. (Original) The spacer of claim 28 wherein the sling engaging member is substantially V-shaped.

30. (Currently Amended) A sling delivery system, comprising:

a sling assembly comprising an elongate sling and a sleeve covering at least a portion of the elongate sling; and

a spacer for positioning a portion of ~~a~~ the sleeve away from a portion of ~~a~~ the sling at least partially enclosed within the sleeve.

31. (Currently Amended) The sling delivery system of claim 30 wherein the sleeve comprises first and second ends and the spacer is positioned intermediate to the first and second ends.

32. (Original) The sling delivery system of claim 30 wherein the sling comprises first and second sides, the sleeve comprises first and second sides, and the spacer is disposed between the second side of the sling the second side of the sleeve.

33. (Original) The sling delivery system of claim 32 wherein the first side of the sleeve comprises a discontinuity.

34. (Original) The sling delivery system of claim 32 wherein the spacer creates a loop in a mid-length portion of the second side of the sleeve.

35. (Original) The sling delivery system of claim 34 wherein the loop comprises a sleeve bridge.

36. (Original) The sling delivery system of claim 30 wherein a mid-length portion of the sling is devoid of covering by the sleeve.

37. (Original) A sling system comprising

a sling,

a sleeve covering at least a portion of the sling, and

a spacer, wherein the sleeve comprises first and second sides, the first side having first and second slit-shaped apertures intermediately located between first and second ends of the sleeve, the sling threads out of the sleeve through the first slit-shaped aperture and back into the sleeve through the second slit-shaped aperture creating a mid-length sleeve loop, and the spacer is positioned to

space the sling away from the mid-length sleeve loop.

38. (Original) The sling system of claim 37 wherein the spacer is a tube and wherein the sleeve loop is partially secured within the interior of the tube.

39. (Original) The sling system of claim 37 wherein the tube is substantially flat.

40. (Original) The sling system of claim 39 wherein the substantially flat tube comprises an aperture for sighting a cutting line through the spacer and sleeve loop to separate the sleeve into portions that may be removed from about the sling.

41. (Original) A sling assembly comprising:

a sling;

a first sleeve having a first end and a second end;

a second sleeve having a first end and a second end; and

a tube, wherein the second end of the first sleeve and the second end of the second sleeve are fitted into the tube.

42. (New) The spacer of claim 1, further comprising an aperture.

43. (New) The spacer of claim 2, wherein the portion of the sleeve is positioned within the spacer such that cutting a cross-section of the spacer releases the portion of the sleeve that is enclosed within the spacer.

44. (New) The spacer of claims 1, wherein the spacer has first and second sides, and the portion of the sleeve is at least partially enclosed between the first and second sides.

45. (New) The spacer of claim 44, wherein the spacer is closed along a top edge and open along first and second intermediate edges.

46. (New) The spacer of claim 44, wherein a bottom edge of the spacer is bonded together, and wherein the bottom edge is bonded to a section of the portion of the sleeve.

47. (New) The sling delivery system of claim 30, wherein the spacer at least partially encloses the portion of the sleeve.